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"ROBINSON CRUSOE" COLLETT.

A Tale of

Shipwreck and a Desert Island.

A FAMILY MEMOIR

BY

PETER G. LAURIE.

[PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.]

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“ROBINSON CRUSOE” COLLETT.

A TALE OF SHIPWRECK AND A DESERT ISLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHIPWRECK.

In a family memoir which I compiled some two years since, entitled “Our Collett Ancestors,” reference was made to a member of the family—John Collett, born about 1720, the second son of Richard Collett and Elizabeth Cobb his wife, stated to have been “wrecked in the ‘Doddington,’ East Indiaman.” I have so often found traditions of this character to have no foundation in fact—a similar story being told regarding another member of the family, Richard Collett the son of the Rev. Peter Collett of Rye and Denton, who was variously stated to have been lost in the “Kent,” East Indiaman, burned at sea—a memorable wreck which took place in the year 1825—and alternatively to have been killed at the Siege of Seringapatam, which occurred in 1799—neither of which proved to be correct—that I made it my special object in the present case so far as possible to verify the facts. I should explain that Richard Collett, whom I have alluded to above, very probably took part in the attack on Seringapatam, because he was attached to a regiment—the 2nd Bombay Native Infantry—engaged in the siege, but it is quite clear he could not have been killed upon that occasion because, as a matter of fact, according to the official records, he died three years later, in the year 1802, at a place called Cannanore, in the Bombay Presidency. Obviously also he could not have been lost in the wreck of the “Kent,” East Indiaman, as this event did not occur until 1825, three-and-twenty years after his death. Among my papers I have a pamphlet containing a narrative of the disaster to the “Kent,” written by Major MacGregor, of H.M. 31st Regiment, one of the survivors. When all hope seemed at an end the Major threw over a short note addressed to his father, enclosed in a bottle, intimating their impending fate, and this bottle, thrown overboard in the Bay of Biscay on 1st March, 1825, was picked up on the coast of Barbadoes on the 30th September, 1826—nineteen months afterwards—and returned to him.

In an old register of shipping at Lloyds I found an entry of the Ship "Doddington," subsequently stated to have been lost in 1755, and with the aid of the authorities of the British Museum I succeeded in unearthing a little pamphlet, entitled :

"AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE OF THE LOSS OF THE
'DODDINGTON,' EAST INDIAMAN,

And of the adventures of those on board who
survived the Shipwreck.

From the Journal of one of the Surviving Officers.

Printed and Sold at
Bailey's Printing and Register Office,
at the 'Ship and Crown,' in Leadenhall Street,

Where those who want honest Servants
may be immediately supply'd."

a singular title, of a curiously comprehensive character. Narratives somewhat similar in their general terms, and evidently owing their origin to the same source, were also found amongst the records of the Royal Geographical Society.

The facts which this little memoir reveals are of so novel and interesting a character, introducing as they do a member of the Collett family as one of the unfortunate victims, that I feel I shall be justified in reverting once more to family history, and in compiling this little narrative, which I hope I may not inappropriately designate "Robinson Crusoe" Collett.

The "Doddington," East Indiaman, under the command of Captain Samson, sailed from the Downs, bound apparently for Madras, on the 23rd April, 1755, in company with the Ships "Pelham," "Houghton," "Streatham," and "Edgecourt," all vessels in the service of the East India Company. They very soon parted company. The "Doddington" was clear of the Channel in about seven days, and on the 20th May reached "Bonavista," one of the Cape de Verde Islands, putting next day into "Prior Bay," where she found the "Pelham" and the "Streatham," already arrived two hours previously,

and was soon followed by the "Houghton"—the "Edgecourt" not arriving until the 26th May. In modern charts we find the name of "Boavista"—not "Bonavista"—marked as one of the principal of the Cape de Verde Islands, but I believe the names are identical, and "Prior Bay" is evidently "Porto Praya," a commodious harbour in the adjacent island of Santiago, which I believe in olden times formed a customary port of call for our East Indiamen.

The following day the vessels, having taken in water, proceeded upon their voyages, leaving the "Edgecourt" in the roads. They soon again parted company, and after a fine voyage of seven weeks the "Doddington" doubled the Cape of Good Hope, and steering due East for twenty-four hours continued her course in a north-easterly direction.

At a quarter before one o'clock on the morning of Thursday, the 17th July—that is apparently shortly after midnight—the vessel suddenly struck upon a rock. Those on board—the officers and crew—there is no reference to passengers—suddenly awakened by the shock, started up in consternation and rushed upon deck, but only to realise the "alarming terrors" of the situation. The men were "dashed to and fro by the violence of the sea, which rolled over them," the vessel "breaking to pieces at every stroke of the surge." The Captain was washed overboard almost among the first, and was seen no more, and the ship was soon shattered to pieces. The vessel had struck on a barren uninhabited rock in Latitude 33deg. 44m. South, distant 250 leagues East of the Cape of Good Hope.

In the morning it was discovered that twenty-three persons, the sole survivors, had managed to reach the shore. These included Mr. Evan Jones, the chief officer; Mr. John Collett, the second mate; Mr William Webb, third mate; Mr. S. Powell, fifth mate; and Mr. Yets, midshipman. Also Richard Topping, the carpenter; Neal Bothwell and Nathaniel Chisholm, quartermasters; Daniel Ladova, the steward; and a number of seamen and "matrosses," which latter I understand to be gunners or artillerymen, who worked the guns. These twenty-three persons were all that survived of 270 souls on board when the ship struck. You will not fail to notice that John Collett, to whom I have dedicated this memoir, was second officer of the ill-fated vessel.

The first care of the survivors was to search "among the things, which had been thrown up from the ship upon the rocks," for anything to afford them covering, in which they succeeded beyond their hopes. The next thing they felt the want of was fire, and this was not so easily supplied. Some of them attempted to kindle two pieces of wood by rubbing them together, but without success; others went exploring among the rocks hoping to pick up something that might serve for a flint and steel. After a long search they found a box containing two gun flints and a broken file. This was a "joyful acquisition," but still they had nothing that would kindle from a spark, and until something like tinder could be procured the flint and steel were useless. Further search was therefore undertaken "with inexpressible solicitude and anxiety," and at length a cask of gunpowder was found, but to their great disappointment it proved to be wet. Upon close examination, however, a small quantity was found at the bottom which had not suffered damage, and some of this they "bruised on a linen rag," which served them for tinder, and a fire was soon made. Round this all the sick and wounded gathered, while the rest went in search of other necessaries, without which the rock could afford them but a "short respite from destruction." In the afternoon a box of wax candles and a cask of brandy were brought in, "of which every one thought it advisable to take a dram." Subsequently others of the party returned with the information that they had discovered a cask full of fresh water, which they considered of even "more consequence than the brandy." Mr. Jones, the chief officer, found some pieces of salt pork, and others arrived soon after driving before them seven live hogs which had come ashore. Casks of beer and water and flour were seen at a distance upon the rocks, but it was not possible to get at them at the time. The approach of night made it desirable to provide shelter. Mr. Collett, the second mate, with several of the hands, therefore set to work to construct a tent out of some canvas that had been thrown ashore, and this was successfully effected; but unfortunately the tent, for want of sufficient material, was too small to hold them all. The island was very much frequented by a "kind of water fowl, something larger than a duck, called a gannet,"—more correctly, I believe, a species of goose,—which resorted to the higher portions of the rock, and in this elevated position the tent was erected, "to avoid its being inundated," and all the sick and wounded

were carried up to it and a fire kindled. "But as they had passed the day without food, so they passed the night without rest. * * * The night was so tempestuous that the wind blew away the fire, and before it could be scraped together again the rain put it out."

In the morning—Friday, 18th July—those who were able continued the search among the rocks for such articles as had been washed up from the wreck, but to their great mortification they discovered that the casks which they had seen the night before, with the exception of one of Beer and another of Flour, had all been "staved to pieces" against the rocks. These two casks were fortunately secured, but they had hardly been safely landed when the tide flowed up and put a stop to further work that day.

The company was now called together to eat their first meal, and some "rashers of Pork were broiled for dinner." "The sitting down thus desolate and forlorn," continues the account "to a repast which they used to share in "convivial cheerfulness—which naturally arose from the "consciousness of present plenty and the hope of future—"struck them with such a sense of their condition, that "they burst into passionate lamentations, wringing their "hands and looking round them with all the wildness of "despair. The groans of the sick and wounded, destitute "of skilful aid and medicines, were," says the writer, who was himself terribly bruised and had his left arm broken, "one of the most affecting scenes he had ever "witnessed." "In such tumult of mind our thoughts "hurry from our object to another, to fix if possible upon "something that may afford comfort; and one of the "company recollecting that, as the carpenter was among "them, they might build a sloop if they could procure "materials and tools, mentioned this as a subject of hope "to the rest. Every one's attention was immediately turned "to the carpenter, who declared that he had no doubt, but "that he should be able to build a ship that would carry "them all to some port of safety, if tools and materials "could be found. At that time there seemed indeed no "rational prospect of procuring either, any more than of "being able to victual a vessel, if they had one ready built. "Yet no sooner had they placed their deliverance one "remove beyond total impossibility, than they seemed to "think it neither improbable nor difficult. They began "to eat without further repining, and from that moment "the boat engrossed their whole conversation, and they

“not only debated upon the size and manner of rigging her, but to what port they should steer—whether to the Cape or Delagoa? As soon as they had finished their repast, some went in search of tools and others to mend the tent. No tools however were found that day.”

We can fully appreciate and sympathise with these unfortunate people's feelings—their sense of utter despondency and despair at starting, and the hopelessness which supervened when once some practical scheme for relief and rescue suggested itself. It will be unnecessary for me to point out that the association of Mr. John Collett, the second officer of the vessel, with these disastrous incidents, has suggested the title of this narrative, which I have designated “ROBINSON CRUSOE” COLLETT.

CHAPTER II.

THE DESERT ISLAND.

I shall now continue the account very much in the terms of the original narrative. The orthography, and even the language, I am bound to say, are occasionally of a very erratic character—very quaint and very old-fashioned—but with suitable modifications and corrections, the record of their adventures and privations proceeds as follows :

Sunday, 19th July. “Secured four butts of water, one cask of flour (‘flower’ it is called), one hogshead of brandy, and one of the smaller boats, which had been thrown up by the tide in a shattered condition. But found no tools except a scraper.”

Sunday, 20th July. “Had the good fortune to find a hamper, in which were some files, sail needles, gimlets, and an azimuth compass card. Also found two quadrants, a carpenter’s adze, a chisel, three sword blades, and a chest of treasure. This search was made early in the morning, as there had been a prodigious surf rolling in all the day before, by which it was reasonable to suppose something would be thrown up. At ten o’clock all assembled to prayers, and did not go out again till after dinner, when they found most of the packets of letters belonging to the King and the Company”—the East India Company—“which were carefully dried and laid by.” The discovery of the chest of treasure led to serious trouble afterwards.

“The same day, while searching about the beach, they found the body of a “gentlewoman,” which proved to be that of Mrs. Collett, the wife of the second mate, who was then at a little distance from the spot. The mutual affection of this couple was remarkably tender, and Mr. Jones, the chief officer, immediately stepped aside to Mr Collett and contrived to take him to the other side of the rock, while his companions dug a grave in which they deposited the body, reading over it the burial service from a French Prayer Book, which had drifted ashore from the wreck. Having thus paid the debt of humanity to the

dead, and concealed from Mr. Collett a sight which would seriously, if not fatally, have affected him, they found means after some days to disclose by degrees what they had done and to give him the wedding ring, which they had taken from her finger. He received it with great emotion, and afterwards spent many days in raising a monument over the grave, by piling up the squarest stones he could find, on the top of which he fixed an elm plank and inscribed it with her name, her age, the time of her death, and some account of the fatal accident by which it was occasioned." It seems strange, and quite out of the usual order of things, that the second mate of a vessel should have his wife with him on board, but such is the narrative as handed down to us, and there is no reason to question its accuracy. There is no mention of any other female on board, although we might have supposed the vessel carried passengers.

Monday, 21st July. "Secured some more water and pork, and found some timber, planks, cordage, and canvas. The latter were secured with great joy for the boat, though as yet many implements were wanting, without which it was impossible for the carpenter to get on with his work. He had just finished a saw, but he had neither hammer nor nails. It happened however that one of the seamen—Hendrick Scantz, a Swede—having picked up an old pair of bellows brought them to his companions, and told them that he had been by profession a smith, and that with these bellows and a forge, which he hoped they would be able by his direction to build, he could furnish the carpenter with all the tools he would require, nails included, as plenty of iron might be obtained by burning the timber which had come on shore from the wreck. This assurance was received with a transport of joy, the smith immediately applying himself to mend the bellows, and the three following days were spent in building a tent and a forge, and in bringing together the timber and planks for the use of the carpenter, who was meantime busy in getting ready the few tools he had, with a view to beginning the boat as soon as possible."

Thursday, 24th July. "The carpenter assisted by Nathaniel Chisholm, the quarter-master, began to work upon the keel of the boat, which they had determined should be a sloop, 30 feet long and 12 feet wide. This day also the smith finished his forge and laid in a quantity of fir for fuel. From this time the carpenter and smith

continued to work with indefatigable diligence, except when they were prevented by the weather; the smith having fortunately found the ring and nut of a Bower anchor, which served for an anvil, supplied chisels, axes, hammers, nails, as these were wanted, and the carpenter used them with great dexterity and dispatch—until unfortunately one day he fell sick.”

“As the lives of the whole company depended upon the carpenter, it is needless to say they watched his recovery with the utmost impatience and anxiety, and to their unspeakable joy he was so far recovered on the 2nd August, as to be able to return to work.”

“In the meantime the stores, which they had saved from the wreck, were so nearly exhausted that they were placed on an allowance of two ounces of bread a man per day, and no salt pork, the latter being reserved to victual the boat. Water also fell short. In this distress they had recourse to several expedients; they dug a well in hopes of finding a spring, but were disappointed; and they also attempted to knock down some of the gannets that settled on the top of the rock, in which they had better success; but they found the flesh very rank, of a fishy taste and as black as a shoe. They also made a raft or float, called a “Catamaran,” on which they went fishing, with such hooks and lines as had come ashore. They also killed some seals, but all those who ate of them were taken very unwell. When driven to great distress, they killed one of the hogs saved from the wreck, but they were generally successful in fishing on “the float.”

“It happened on one occasion that Mr. Collett the second mate, and Mr. Yets, the midshipman, were very near being driven out to sea on one of these “floats,” when they would inevitably have perished. On the 20th August, they had been fishing all the afternoon till about 4 o’clock, when they weighed and endeavoured to return, but the wind suddenly freshening up to the westward, they found that instead of gaining headway they drove out to sea very fast. The people on shore perceived their distress, but were unable to assist them. At last they sent out another float with “killicks”—a small anchor I believe—“and ropes, which they hoped would enable them to ride out the gale, till the wind became more moderate; but the surf was so great that it upset the float, and the men who had started to their assistance were obliged to swim back. In the meantime they saw their friends still driving out to

sea at a great rate, and were just giving them up to inevitable destruction, when the carpenter sent word, that he could make the little boat so tight that she "should not take in water faster than one man could bale it out." This gave them fresh hope, and everyone was ready to venture out for the deliverance of their friends. The carpenter dispatched the boat in about a quarter of an hour, and she soon overtook the float and took Collett and Yets on board. But the water gained very fast upon them notwithstanding their utmost efforts, and by the time she came in, she was so full of water that in a few minutes more she must have sunk."

"As they were now afraid of venturing any more on the raft, the carpenter went again to work on the little boat and put her into complete repair. Their success in fishing was very uncertain; sometimes they took great quantities and sometimes they took none. The supplies they obtained on shore were equally precarious; the gannets would sometimes settle in amazing numbers, like a cloud, and sometimes they would totally disappear for several days together. This made them very desirous of finding some way of preserving the supplies they caught, that they might lay by the surplus of a fortunate day, to serve them when neither gannets or fish were to be had. They made several attempts to cure both fish and fowl by smoking it, but this proved nearly fatal to them all. The smith had mended a copper vessel for the experiment, and they immediately set to work, without knowing that their process of saltmaking would dissolve the surface of the copper into "verdigrease," and that the solution or rust of copper was poison. Salt it is true was produced, but the quality that made it poisonous abounded to such a degree as to make it intolerably offensive to the taste, and it had to be thrown away, while those who had volunteered to taste it were seized with cold sweats and violent cholic, which effectually served to convince them of the danger they had escaped."

CHAPTER III.

AN ADVENTURE WITH SAVAGES.

Wednesday, 3rd September. "These unfortunate people had now been inhabitants of this desert rock ever since the 17th July, nearly seven weeks, and during this time they had often seen a great smoke on the distant mainland, which made them very anxious to send the boat to see if assistance could be obtained. On this day Bothwell, the quarter master, and Rosenbury and Taylor, two seamen, set out on a voyage of discovery, and at night the people on shore made a large fire on the highest part of the rock as a signal to them."

"While they were awaiting the return of the boat they were all thrown into great consternation by an accident which happened to the carpenter, who unfortunately cut his leg with an adze in such a manner that he was in great danger of bleeding to death, they having no surgeon among them, nor anything suitable to apply to the wound. At length with much difficulty the blood was stanchcd, and the wound healed without any bad symptoms intervening."

Saturday, 6th September. "The weather having been fair for 40 hours they impatiently awaited the return of the boat. At noon they became very uneasy at having seen nothing of her, but just as they were sitting down to dinner, they were agreeably surprised by two of their people, who came running over the rocks announcing her approach. They all started up overjoyed at the sound, and ran to see her arrive, in the hope that she had succeeded in her object; but they soon distinguished that she was rowed only by one man, who plied both oars. They concluded, therefore, that the other two were either lost or detained; but presently they saw another get up from the bottom of the boat, where apparently he had been lying down for rest. And then the boat came forward somewhat faster, though still but slowly. Dinner was entirely forgotten, and after they had waited an hour on

the beach with the utmost impatience, the boat arrived. The two men were Rosenbury and Taylor, who, the moment they stepped on shore, threw themselves on their knees, and in a short but earnest prayer returned thanks to God for having once more set them safe upon this place, which, barren and desolate as it was, they now looked upon as a refuge from a situation of much greater distress. Having exerted their utmost efforts to bring the boat in, their strength completely forsook them, and they were not able to rise from the ground without assistance."

"As soon as they had been carried to the tent by the assistance of the rest, everybody was busy to procure them refreshment, for they found that the boat was quite bare of provisions and water. They dressed them some fish with as much haste as they could, and perceiving that they were quite exhausted with their exertions, and with want of rest, they left them, when they had eaten their food, without asking any questions, and they immediately fell asleep. The behaviour of these honest sailors to their messmates was an uncommon instance of hearty kindness and generous self-denial; the impatience of their curiosity must have been both increased and justified in proportion as they were interested in the account that was to gratify it; yet even this curiosity, in which life itself was concerned, they had the kindness and the fortitude to repress, rather than delay the refreshment of others for its gratification."

The account which was given by the two adventurers when they awoke was to this effect: "About three o'clock on the day on which they set out, they got round a point about six leagues east of the rock. As they approached, it had the appearance of a double point, which encouraged them to hope that between the two points they should find a harbour; but in this hope they were disappointed, for they found a considerable surf all along the coast. About five o'clock, having seen signs of natives on the land, they ventured to pull in for shore, but the moment they got into the surf the boat upset. By this accident Bothwell was drowned, and the other two reached the shore in an exhausted and feeble condition, and were left destitute of every kind of provisions except a small keg of brandy. As soon as they had recovered their strength they crawled along the shore to seek for the boat, having no other prospect of shelter from the wild beasts, which might be expected to be abroad at night. After some trouble they found her, but

they were too weak to get her up, and darkness coming on they were obliged to lie down upon the sand with no other covering than the shelter of a tree, and in this condition they passed the night. As soon as the morning dawned they went again to look for the boat, which the surf had driven from where they left her. As they walked along the coast they saw a man and advanced towards him, upon which he ran away into the woods, which grew very thick near the beach. Soon afterwards they discovered the body of their companion Bothwell, which had been washed up upon the sand a considerable distance from the water, and torn to pieces by some wild beast. This terrified them exceedingly, and having found the boat, the dread of passing another night on shore determined them immediately to return. In this attempt they were prevented by a fresh gale, which sprang up, and before they put back, the boat upset with them a second time, and drove with them along the shore. After much struggling and swimming they once more got safe on land; but as they had now been fasting ever since three o'clock the day before, they were faint with hunger and fatigue. It happened that they met with a fruit resembling an apple, which they eagerly gathered and ate, without knowing either its name or its quality. By good fortune it did them no harm, and being somewhat refreshed by the fruit, they made shift to haul the boat on shore, and turning it upside down, they crept under it to sleep, being thus sheltered from the sun and secured against the wild beasts. Those who know the irresistible power of sleep after long watching and excessive labour will not conclude that their first slumber was short, because their situation was incommodious and insecure. They waked however before the morning, and peeping under the edge of the boat could discern the feet of wild beasts, which by their claws they concluded to be tigers" ("tygers" they called them) "passing to and fro round the vessel. This was a sufficient motive to remain in their resting place till daylight, when they looked out again and saw the feet of a human being. After this discovery they came from under the boat to the great astonishment of the poor savage, and two other men and a boy who were at some distance. When they"—that is the savages—"had got all together, and were a little recovered from their surprise, they made signs to the sailors to go away, which they endeavoured to do, though they were able to move but very slowly."

"Before they had gone far from the boat a considerable number of natives ran down upon them with lances. It happened that Rosenbury had picked up the mast of the boat, and a pistol which had been washed on shore; and being thus armed, when the Indians came down upon him, and being besides unable to run, he imprudently turned about and, exerting all his strength, advanced towards them in a threatening manner, supposing that they would have been seized with panic and have retreated into the woods."

"He was mistaken however, for instead of running away they surrounded him and began to whet their lances. Taylor thought it was now time to try what could be done by supplication; he therefore threw himself on his knees and in a piteous tone cried out for mercy; but Rosenbury took refuge in the water. The savages immediately came up to Taylor and began to strip him. He suffered them quietly to take his shoes and his shirt, but when they attacked his trousers he made some resistance, and by his gestures entreated they would not leave him quite naked, upon which they desisted. They then made signs to Rosenbury to come to them, who was all this while swimming about in the sea; but he refused, signifying that they would kill him. They then pointed to Taylor, intimating that they had not killed him. Thereupon he came forward, and having first thrown them his pistol and all his clothes except his shirt, he ventured to put himself into their hands. When he came up they offered him no violence; only held the boat's mast and the pistol to him by way of deriding the folly of his attempts to frighten them. They seemed very much pleased with the clothes, which they divided among them as far as they would go. They then began to rifle the boat, and having taken all the rope they could find, and the hook by which the rudder hung to the stern-post, they began to knock the stern to pieces for the iron which was about it. Next to knocking the poor wretches on the head, this was the most fatal thing they could do, and, rough as the poor sailors were, they burst into tears at the injury offered to the boat, and entreated the savages to desist with such agony of distress that they suffered the boat to remain as they found it. Encouraged by this appearance of forbearance and kindness, and urged by hunger, they asked by signs for something to eat. This request was also granted, and having given them some roots they again made signs for them to depart; upon which

they once more launched their boat and got in it, but the wind blowing from the west they could not put off. The natives perceiving that they were willing to comply with their request, though not able, covered them with the boat to sleep under, and left them as they had found them. The next morning the weather being fine, and the wind easterly, they launched the boat a third time and returned back to the rock."

The unfortunate death of Bothwell on this expedition reduced their number to twenty-two. They had now been on the rock nearly four months, and had the boat been lost upon this occasion, or had it been detained or destroyed by the savages, their prospects of relief or rescue would have been seriously affected. It seems almost a miracle that the two men should have got back safely to their companions. What became of the body of poor Bothwell is not related. Probably his remains had been too seriously mangled by the wild beasts to admit of burial, even if the means had been available of carrying it out.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "HAPPY DELIVERANCE."

"From this time until Sunday, 28th of September, the carpenter and smith continued to work upon the boat, and their companions were busy in getting in from time to time what was thrown up from the wreck, particularly cordage and canvas to furnish rigging for the boat, and some casks of fresh water. The latter they were very solicitous to keep, as their escape in the boat scarce depended as much upon fresh water as upon the sails themselves. On this day after they had been at prayers, a duty which was regularly and publicly performed every Sunday, the officers discovered that the chest of Treasure had been broken open, and the greater part of the contents taken away and concealed. It may perhaps be thought strange that people, whom danger had made so punctilious in their religious duties, should at the same time be guilty of theft; but it should be remembered that as soon as a ship is lost, the sailors lose their pay and the Captain his command; and every distinction and subordination that subsisted on shipboard is at an end. Whatever is cast ashore from the wreck is by the sailors considered as common property. The men, therefore, who secretly took what they considered their share of this treasure, were not in their own opinion guilty of dishonesty, but intended only to secure what they feared the officers would monopolize. The latter, however, when they discovered what had been done, and found that nobody would own they knew anything about the matter, wrote out the form of an oath which they proposed to administer separately to each, the officers to take it first. But to this the majority objected; for though "they might not consider they had committed any crime by taking the treasure, they knew it would be not only immoral, but impious, to swear they had not taken it." The minority being thus helpless in the matter, the affair was suffered to rest without further enquiry or remonstrance." This is what may be called "yielding to

circumstances"; obviously there could be no "immorality" nor "impiety" in swearing they had not taken the treasure—on the part of those who had not done so. We may conclude therefore, that those who objected to take the oath were really the guilty parties, and were simply actuated by their knowledge of the fact. The whole proceeding and its apology savours very much of what one may term "desert island" morality. It is to be noticed that those who had plundered the chest did not offer to restore any portion of what they had taken, although, even according to their own argument, their companions were obviously entitled to a share."

"On the 6th October they found a fowling piece; this was a joyful acquisition, and though the barrel was much bent it was soon made serviceable by the carpenter and used with great success in shooting the birds, which previously they had no means of taking except by knocking them down with a stick." It does not say where they got the powder and shot.

"On Friday, October 10th, they perceived the gannets, which had of late forsaken them, hovering about the rock in great numbers, and were in hopes they would settle to lay their eggs, in which, to their great joy, they were not disappointed. From this time they were constantly supplied with eggs in great plenty until the beginning of January, when the season of laying came to an end."

"On Sunday, 19th October, Mr. Collett, Mr. Webb, and two others ventured out once more on "the float," but the wind springing up very fresh the float broke loose, and drove with them to the other side of the rock. The wind still rising and the sea running very high, it was impossible for the boat to put out; they were therefore obliged to remain all night among the seals on the rocks, without any shelter or refreshment. "But in this situation—trying as it was—they derived great comfort from reflecting how much more dreadful it would have been, if instead of being driven on to the rocks, they had been carried out to sea." It was noon the next day before the wind abated, and then the boat ventured off; but as the waves still ran high, the boat could not take in more than two at a time, and they had to leave the "float" behind. Rainy weather now supervened, which proved very acceptable, as they contrived to save some of the water; but they were still in great want of bread, having lived many days on short allowance. As a last resource, they attempted to build an

oven, for though they had no bread, they had some barrels of flour—"flower" they called it. In this they succeeded beyond their expectations, and were able to convert their "flower" into tolerable biscuit. But even the biscuit in course of time became so nearly expended, that they were obliged to limit themselves to a few ounces a day—"without brandy"—of which only a small quantity remained, and this they "reserved for the carpenter." They were also so short of water that they were allowed but half a pint a day."

"In this condition nevertheless they happily, in a great degree, preserved their health and vigour, and on the 16TH OF FEBRUARY THEY LAUNCHED THEIR BOAT AND CALLED HER THE 'HAPPY DELIVERANCE.' On the 17th they got their little pittance of stores on board, and ON THE 18TH THEY SET SAIL FROM THE ROCK, on which they had lived just seven months, and to which at parting they gave the name of 'BIRD ISLAND' It was one o'clock in the afternoon when they weighed anchor and stood for the river St. Lucia, about 300 leagues distant."

"When they embarked they were two and twenty in number, and had on board 2 butts and 4 hogsheads of water, two of the hogs that had come on shore from the ship, one firkin of butter, about 90 pounds of biscuit, and about ten days' salt provisions at 2 ounces a man per day, but the latter was said to be quite rotten and out of condition." It seems strange to read of two live hogs still surviving after seven months upon this desolate rock. One almost wonders what they had lived upon. "The joy which they felt at putting off from this dreadful 'seat of famine and desolation' was too great to be expressed; but it was of very short continuance, for as soon as they got to the mouth of the little channel, which led to the island, the 'grapnails' came home, and they were instantly driven on the rocks, where their boat, which had cost seven months incessant labor, and was the foundation of all their hopes, struck so often, and with such violence, that they were thrown into the greatest consternation, and expected every moment she would be broken to pieces. It was a great aggravation of their distress, that no effort of theirs could contribute to extricate or relieve them, so that they could only gaze at each other in despair and wait—helpless and inactive—for the moment of destruction."

"In this condition, however, it pleased Him, whom the winds and waves obey, to relieve them. A swell of the sea

lifted the boat from the rock, on which she was beating, and carrying her over the bar, left her in four fathoms of water. Here they immediately anchored, and commenced to repair their damage, but this was not effectually completed till noon the next day." For twelve days, according to their account, until the 2nd March, they incessantly persevered, but without making much headway owing to the strong opposing current. In the meantime their provisions became very nearly exhausted, and they had the double prospect of shipwreck and starvation staring them in the face. In this predicament they came to the conclusion to let the boat drift with the current, in the hope that they might thus reach the Cape.

"The very next day however the wind, which till then had been easterly, suddenly blew a strong gale from the west; so that the wind now counteracted the force of the current. The gale continued all that day and the following night, and the next morning, Thursday, 4th March, it blew a perfect hurricane. They now endeavoured to "lie to," but they shipped such heavy seas that they were in constant danger of being swamped, and were, therefore, compelled to sail steadily under topsail only. By this means they were driven before the gale at a great rate, until next morning about 3 o'clock, when the weather again became fine."

"This course they continued till Wednesday, the 10th March, when the wind shifting to the eastward they anchored in 12 fathom water, at a distance of about half-a-mile from the shore. In the evening many of the natives came down to the water side, hallowing and making signs that they should land, which they many times attempted to do, but found it impracticable. In the morning the natives appeared again, repeating their signals, and driving down great numbers of cattle, but the "poor wretches" on board were still tantalized by the sight of plenty, which they could not reach, for no place to land could be found."

"On Sunday, the 14th March, two of the people, having had nothing to eat for a couple of days, begged to be allowed to land, saying they would rather take their chance of losing their lives amongst the savages, than die of starvation in the boat. One of them had only just sprung ashore when a shark suddenly seized the blade of one of the oars in his mouth, and nearly wrenched it out of the sailor's hands"—a rather close shave.

"On Monday, the 15th March, they determined at all events to make an attempt to get the sloop into the river; having waited until it was high water they sent the little boat ahead to sound, and following her at a proper distance they at length ventured over the bar, and having happily received no damage, they anchored in two-and-a-half fathoms of water."

"The natives now came again to the shore, and the people on board got together some brass buttons, small bits of iron, nails, and copper hoops, as the most likely commodities to exchange for mutton and beef. The copper hoops they bent into bracelets to be worn on the legs and arms, such as are worn by all the natives of this coast, who have trafficked with Europeans, and are called "Bangles." With these baubles, which are prized by these poor savages, perhaps with as much reason as gems and gold are prized by those who hold their simplicity in contempt, the poor famished adventurers hastened on shore, and soon made the natives understand what they wanted, and what return they would make. This it is said they did by "kneeling down and knawing the grass and holding their hands up like horns, and making a noise like that of bullocks, sheep, &c." Two bullocks, each weighing 600lbs. weight, were soon after driven down to the beach with great expedition, and bartered for about one pound weight of copper hooks, and 4 brass buttons. Provisions of all kinds were promised "in great plenty" at the same rate—particularly milk—which they sold at a very low rate, 2 or 3 gallons for a single button, and a small grain that resembled Guinea wheat. This grain they attempted to bake into biscuit, but could not succeed; however they found an excellent substitute by boiling it with their meat, which answered the same purpose as bread, and made very good food."

"They continued on shore at this place nearly a fortnight, and found the natives an honest, open, harmless, and friendly people, ready to do any kind office that lay in their power, and always dividing what they brought from the chase, though it was ever so little, as far as it would go, with looks and gestures that "strongly expressed that pleasure which no selfish gratification can produce." Their manner of living and appearance were said to be "the same that have so often been described by those who have described the people called Hottentots," who inhabit the Cape of Good Hope, except that as "these had not been used

to any commerce with Europeans they were more innocent, benevolent, and sincere"—a rather severe commentary on the effects of contact with civilization. "During their stay the Doddington people frequently went up into the country to the native villages ten or twelve miles distant, where the natives lived in huts, covered with rushes forming a kind of thatch, and very neat within. Their chief exercise was hunting, their arms being lances and two short sticks with a knob at the end, with which, after having wounded their game with the lance, they knocked it down. The river was very full of Manatees or sea-cows, which they found no ways mischievous. They mostly came on shore in the night, and their chief food was grass. The natives were in the habit of catching them asleep, and killing them to eat. They had a few elephants teeth, which they offered very cheap, but the people had no room for them in their boat. The natives wore little or no clothing in the day-time, and at night only a bullock's hide, which they dried thoroughly and made very supple. Their chief ornaments were a piece of a bullocks's tail, which hung dangling down to their heels, with a few small shells tied to it; they also wore small pieces of the skin tied round their knees, ancles, and arms. Their hair they plaistered up with a great quantity of tallow or fat, mixed with a kind of red earth, and they rubbed their bodies all over with grease. They were prodigiously active and dexterous with their lances; they often saw them throw a lance over 40 yards and hit a small head of corn. They have another method of exercising themselves in the day, and commonly when they meet or part from one another—that is by dancing or jumping all round a ring, and making a most hideous noise, sometimes hallowing and sometimes grunting like a hog; then running backwards and forwards as hard as they can, flourishing their lances."

"It was a remarkable circumstance that among these people, who were all black and woolly haired, there was a youth of about twelve or fourteen years of age, who was quite white, and had regular features, with fair light hair. The people of the sloop observed that he was treated as a servant, being sent on errands, and sometimes not permitted to eat till the rest had done. They also took notice that he disappeared a few days before they left the coast, and therefore they suspected the natives were afraid they might carry him off with them, nor, indeed, was one of the natives themselves to be seen on the morning they went away."

CHAPTER V.

THE END.

“On Monday, the 29th March, having laid in great plenty of provisions, they got over the bar and made sail for the River St. Lucia, where they arrived on Tuesday, 6th April, having found the current more favourable than before, and no other occurrence having happened that was worth relating.”

“Having got into the River St. Lucia and anchored in in 3 fathoms of water, the party went on shore, but they found the people very different from those with whom they last traded. When the brass buttons and bits of old iron were offered them they refused them; and taking up some sand from the beach they poured it out of one hand into the other, by which they apparently intended to intimate that they wanted strong liquors, though the sloop's people did not at first understand them; and if they had understood, they had no strong liquor for them. They made signs also that they wanted some brass rings big enough to serve as collars; but in this too the strangers were equally unable to gratify them. Among other things they offered them was a brass handle of an old chest, and a piece of the “bunten” they had made their colors of. These happened to be acceptable, and were exchanged for two large bullocks, and six good fowls. They also vouchsafed to purchase some of the buttons with pumpkins, potatoes, and other herbs and fruit.”

“The natives of this part of the coast, by their frequent dealings with Europeans, had learned to be cleanly in their persons and food, dressing their hair up very neatly and laying aside the grease and garbage with which savages usually anointed and adorned themselves; but at the same time they had learned to be proud, crafty, deceitful, and dishonest”—further painful results of contact with civilization. “Our adventurers stayed with them until Sunday, the 18th April, and then getting all on board their little craft, they weighed anchor and made sail.”

"Hitherto they had been united by adversity in the bond of friendship, but with the near prospect of deliverance their minds became less pliant and tender, and their different peculiarities of temper and opinion were indulged with less restraint. As they were sailing down the river a dispute arose about the time and manner of crossing the bar, which was then very near, and it was carried so high, that some of them hauled down the sails and let go the "grapnail" close to a bank of sand; nine of them then hoisted out the little boat and went on shore, swearing that they would sooner take their chance of getting to Delagoa by land than be drowned in attempting to get over the bar. Those who remained on the sloop were by this accident reduced to very great distress; for being prevented by the delay they had suffered, from getting over the bar at high water, and the wind and tide both setting out of the river at a great rate, they were very soon forced on the breakers, where there was then but 8 feet of water—and the vessel drawing 5 feet, she must inevitably have been grounded and beaten to pieces before the tide changed. Contrary to all expectation, however, and from some unknown cause, in less than half-an-hour the surface of the water became smooth, and by the vigorous efforts of those on board the vessel was brought safely out of the river."

"From St. Lucia they "took a new departure," and anchored in De la Goa roads at 4 o'clock in the afternoon on Wednesday, the 21st April, having again narrowly escaped shipwreck on some breakers the night before." It is but right to explain that the dates assigned in the original narrative are obviously often inaccurate. The fact of it being leap-year perhaps made it additionally confusing. "At Delagoa they found the "Rose" galley, Capt. Chandler, trading for beef and ivory, and most of them begged a passage by this boat to Bombay."

"After they had continued here about three weeks, three of the men who had deserted them at St. Lucia, were brought up the river in a small boat of the country, and reported that they had left the remaining six on the other side of the Bay of Delagoa, waiting for a boat to bring them across."

"On board the sloop there was, among other things, the remainder of the chest of Treasure belonging to the East India Company, which had been broken open upon the rock and plundered, upon the assumption that on the loss

of the ship it became common property. The officers who had secured what remained, and who till now had no means of recovering the rest, told Capt. Chandler what had happened, and proceeding with him in his pinnace, well-manned and armed, on board the sloop, they secured all the money, plate, and packets they could find. The people on board the sloop, as soon as they left, fearing that they might be taken into custody, weighed anchor and disappeared during the night. On the 25th May, the "Rose" galley, having on board the officers and remainder of the crew of the "Doddington," weighed anchor and proceeded to Madagascar, with the object of completing her cargo. The natives of Delagoa had," it is said, "sold Capt. Chandler 100 head of cattle, but stole them away again, and refused to restore them without a fresh consideration"—a novel system of trade, based apparently on what one may term "double entry."

"Soon after they had put to sea they made a sail, which, when they came up with it, proved to be the sloop "Happy Deliverance," which had since taken in the other seamen that were left behind at St. Lucia. Of these unfortunate men three had since died, and two were in such a condition that they died the next day—having," as the account says, "after their lives had been so often preserved—almost to a miracle—foolishly sacrificed them to voluntary hardships and fatigue in a fit of unreasonable petulance and causeless disgust." Two of the people on board the sloop, being convinced that no harm was intended them, then came on board the "Rose." One of them was the carpenter Richard Topping, "to the honour of whose ingenuity be "it recorded, that the sloop which he built upon a desolate "rock, with the fragments of the ship, fitted together with "such tools as the pieces of iron casually thrown on "shore would supply, he now sold to Capt. Chandler for "2500 Rupees, nearly equal to £500 sterling money." The Rupees must have declined very sensibly since that time, if this is correct. In the early part of the present century the standard value of a Rupee was two shillings—but at the present moment it is very considerably less even than that. It is but right to say however, that some of the other narratives give a very different version of this transaction. They state that the sloop was sold for 500 Rupees—a considerably modified sum, and it is quite impossible to hazard any surmise as to which is correct. Even this latter transaction however is qualified by the statement that the

sloop "was subsequently seized at Bombay for the proprietors." Who the proprietors of a vessel, built upon a barren rock from wreckage washed ashore, would be, it is rather difficult to suggest? "From this time the sloop pursued her voyage in company with the galley, and both arrived at Madagascar on 14th June, after a voyage of twenty-two days."

"Soon after they had anchored they found the ship 'Carnarvon,' Capt. Hutchinson, arrived there on a voyage from London to China, and as the treasure and packets which had been saved from the 'Doddington,' were to be delivered at Madras, at which port the 'Carnarvon' was to call, the officers went on board the 'Carnarvon,' and leaving Madagascar on the 1st July, they delivered them 'by God's providence' with other private effects to the Company's agent at Madras, on the 1st August, 1756."

Thus terminates the narrative. It does not say what became of the remainder of the party on board the "Rose Galley" and the sloop. For the graphic and interesting account of the shipwreck and the subsequent adventures of the survivors we are avowedly indebted to Mr. Webb, the third mate of the vessel. It is singular that the names of Webb and Collett should be associated in those early days—some generations later the connexion was a very much closer one. The "Doddington Rock" and "Bird Island" will be found in any map of South Africa, slightly to the eastward of Algoa Bay.

It only remains for me to say that the name of John Collett appears constantly throughout the narrative as most prominent among the survivors. In every incident—in every adventure—in every effort for their rescue, Mr. John Collett, the second mate, always took a leading and conspicuous part. In my account of "Our Collett Ancestors" it states that John Collett was "wrecked in the 'Doddington,' East Indiaman." It does not say he lost his life. Possibly he may have subsequently succumbed to illness brought on by the hardships he endured, or by the exposure during those long weary months upon the desolate uninhabited rock. I cannot say—I have told my tale as I have found it—after the lapse of a century and a half—a singular record of the almost forgotten past—a memorable episode in a family history."

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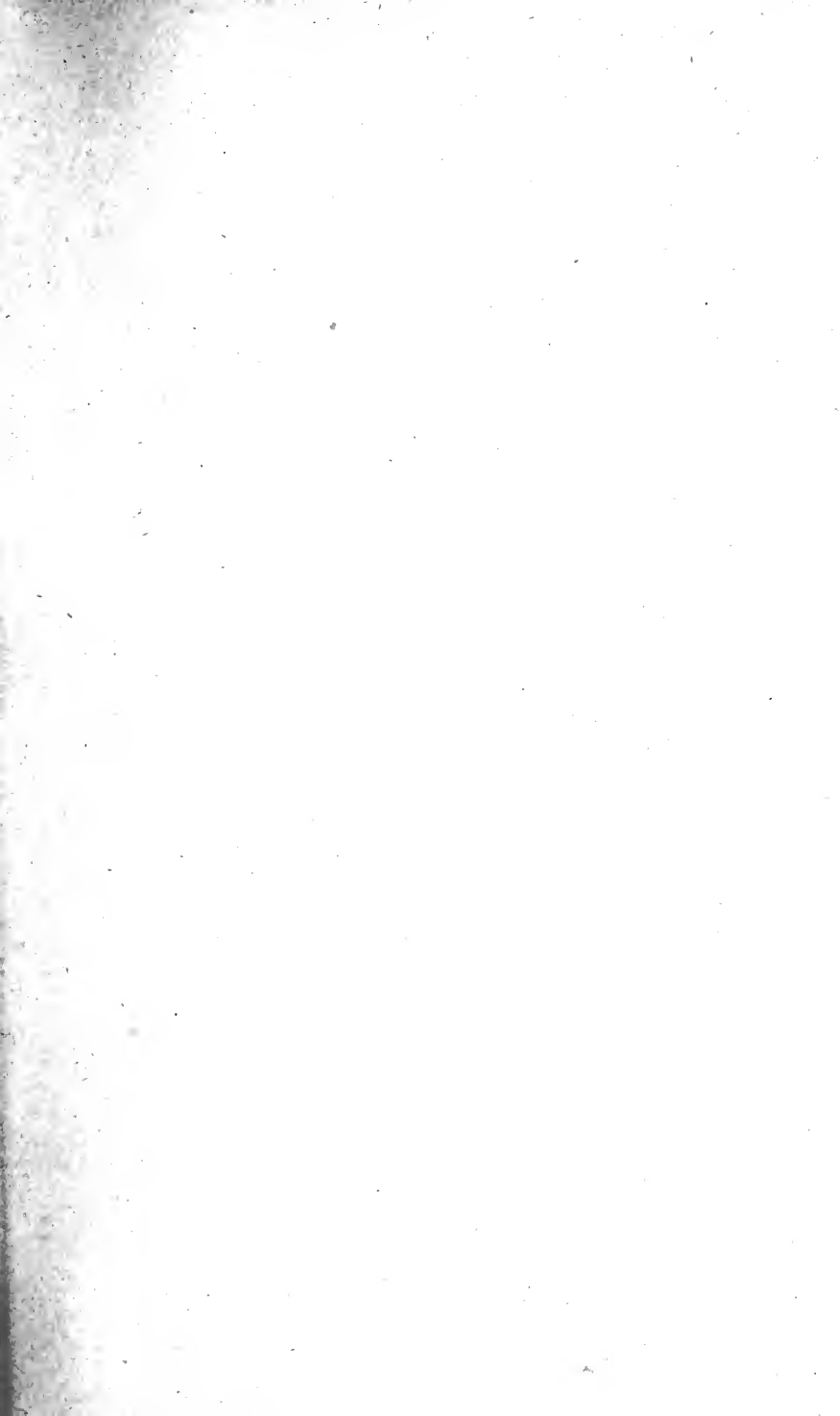
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It is a strange but peculiar circumstance that after I had concluded the above, another account of the loss of the "Doddington" came to light in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for July, 1757, compiled from the journal of Mr. Evan Jones, the chief officer, in which some additional details are given. He makes especial reference to the loss of John Collett's wife: "Mr. Collett lost his wife in the ship; after she struck, he went down and brought her on deck in his arms, but the ship falling upon her broadside, and the decks falling in, he was separated from her, and never saw her afterwards." He then relates how her body was washed ashore and buried upon the island.

In reference to John Collett's own fate all further question is set at rest. Alluding to the arrival of the sloop at Bombay, he says: "Mr. Powell"—that is the fifth mate—"came there in her; all the rest went to Madras in the "Carnarvon," except Mr. Collett and three others," whose names he mentions, "who died of fevers on board the "Rose Galley." And so indeed my forebodings proved only too true! He was "wrecked in the 'Doddington,' East Indiaman," but he did not "lose his life in her." After enduring all the perils and hardships and horrors of shipwreck, and a terrible domestic bereavement—just at the time when his own rescue seemed at hand— he succumbed to the consequences of the trials he had endured, and died of fever—a victim to his privations—a martyr to his duty—and a worthy example to those who survived him. Such was the melancholy end of poor JOHN COLLETT.





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